

04-18-20



IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Anticipated Classification
of this Application:

Attorney Docket No.: F-118

Class:

Date: April 17, 2000

Subclass:

Prior Application:

Group Art Unit: 2761

Examiner: Jamara Franklin

REQUEST FOR FILING A CONTINUATION APPLICATION
UNDER 37 CFR 1.53(b)

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

This is a request for filing a continuation application under 37 CFR 1.53(b), of pending prior application serial number 09/224,256, filed on December 30, 1998, by Richard W. Heiden, et al. for POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES.

1. Attached is a copy of the prior application, including the specification, claims, drawings and declaration and power of attorney as originally filed.
2. Cancel in this application original claim(s) 2-23 of the prior application before calculating the filing fee for this application. (At least one original independent claim must be retained for filing purposes.)

3. The filing fee is calculated below:

**CLAIMS AS FILED IN THE PRIOR APPLICATION
LESS ANY CLAIMS CANCELED BY AMENDMENT**

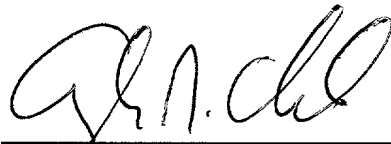
Basic Fee							\$ 690.00
Claims Fee	Number Filed		Number Extra		Rate		
Total Claims	22	- 20 =	2	X	\$18.00	=	\$ 36.00
Independent Claims	4	- 3 =	1	X	\$78.00	=	\$ 78.00
Multiple Dependent Claims					\$260.00	=	\$
Total Filing Fee							\$ 804.00

4. Please charge our Deposit Account Number **16-1885** in the amount of \$ 804.00 for the filing fee.
5. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required or credit any overpayment to Account No. **16-1885**. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.
6. The prior application is assigned of record to Pitney Bowes Inc.
7. A preliminary amendment of this application is enclosed. (Claims added by this amendment have been properly numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered original claim in the prior application.)
8. Address all future communications to:

Angelo N. Chaclos
Pitney Bowes Inc.
Intellectual Property and
Technology Law Department
35 Waterview Drive
P.O. Box 3000
Shelton, CT 06484-8000

9. I hereby verify that the attached application is a true copy of prior application serial number as originally filed on December 30, 1998.

The undersigned declares further that all statements made herein of his/her own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so much are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.



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PITNEY BOWES INC.
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

on April 17, 2000
Date of Deposit

Angelo N. Chaclos
Name of Registered Rep.


Signature

April 17, 2000
Date

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re patent application of:) Attorney Docket No.: F-118
Richard W. Heiden, et al.) Group Art Unit:
Serial No.:) Examiner:
Filed:) Date: April 17, 2000
Title: POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

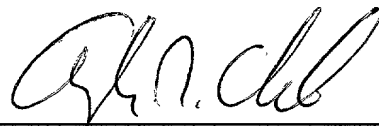
CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY EXPRESS MAIL

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In accordance with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.10, I hereby certify that the attached Certificate Of Mailing By Express Mail, Request For Filing A Continuation Application Under 37 CFR § 1.53(b); Patent Application consisting of twenty-two (22) pages, four (4) sheets of drawings, Declaration and Power of Attorney was deposited with the U.S. Postal Service for delivery by Express Mail on April 17, 2000. The number of the Express Mail mailing label is EJ706017961US.

Respectfully submitted,



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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re patent application of:) Attorney Docket No.: F-118
Richard W. Heiden, et al.) Group Art Unit:
Serial No.:) Examiner:
Filed:) Date: April 17, 2000
Title: POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

In response to the Office Action dated , please amend the above identified application as follows:

In the Specification:

On page 1, please delete lines 4 - 14, and insert the following --This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Number 09/224,256, entitled POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES (Attorney Docket E-796).--

In the claims:

Please cancel Claims 2-23.

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Please add the following new claims.

--24. A system, comprising:

a printing system including a printer for printing on an item intended for a recipient;

a data center in operative communication with the printing system, the printing system being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective message data representative of a message;

a control system in operative communication with the data center and the printing system for:

obtaining recipient information; and

using the recipient information to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the item.

25. The system of claim 24, wherein:

the control system is further for:

receiving from a user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein:

the control system is further for:

compensating the user for printing the selected message; and

charging the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for printing the selected message.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein:

each of the plurality of advertiser accounts further includes restriction data; and

the control system is further for:

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32. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step(s) of:
receiving an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages
that is authorized for printing.
33. The method of claim 32, further comprising the step(s) of:
compensating a user for printing the selected message; and
charging the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for
printing the selected message.
34. The method of claim 33, further comprising the step(s) of:
storing restriction data for each of the plurality of advertiser accounts,
respectively; and
using the recipient information in combination with the restriction data from the
plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available
for printing.
35. The method of claim 34, wherein:
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data,
including at least information relating to one of the following:
commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and
geographic restrictions, and non-addressee restriction data, including at
least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions;
multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and
budget restrictions.
36. The method of claim 35, wherein:
the recipient information includes address information obtained from the user.
37. The method of claim 31, further comprising the step(s) of:
storing restriction data for each of the plurality of advertiser accounts,
respectively; and

using the recipient information in combination with the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available for printing.

38. A memory system accessible by an application program being executed on a data processing system, comprising:

advertiser account information including a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective message data representative of a message for printing on an item intended for a recipient; and
recipient information for use in identifying a subset of messages available for printing on the item.

39. The memory system of claim 38, comprising:

an indication from a user of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing.

40. The memory system of claim 39, comprising:

compensation information for the user for printing the selected message; and
charge information for the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message for printing the selected message.

41. The memory system of claim 40, comprising:

restriction information corresponding to each of the plurality of advertiser accounts, respectively; and
wherein the recipient information may be used in combination with the restriction information from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify the subset of messages available for printing.

42. The memory system of claim 41, wherein:

each of the restriction information, respectively, includes addressee restriction data, including at least information relating to one of the following:

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Signature: [Signature] Date: 11/1/00

POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING
SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

Cross Reference to Related Applications

This application is related to the following co-pending applications filed
5 concurrently herewith and commonly assigned to the assignee of this
application: US Patent Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled POSTAGE
PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING VARIABLE SUBSIDIES FOR PRINTING OF
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES (Attorney Docket No. E-803), US Patent
Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM
10 HAVING A DIGITAL COUPON DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (Attorney Docket
No. E-737 and US Patent Application Number aa/aaa,aaa, entitled
PRODUCTION MAIL SYSTEM HAVING SUBSIDIES FOR PRINTING OF
THIRD PARTY MESSAGES ON MAILPIECES (Attorney Docket No. E-806),
all of which are specifically incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to postage printing systems. More
particularly, this invention is directed to a postage printing system including
subsidies for printing of third party messages.

Background of the Invention

20 Postage printing systems are well known in the art. A typical postage
meter (one example of a postage printing system) applies evidence of
postage, commonly referred to as a postal indicia, to an envelope or other
mailpiece and accounts for the value of the postage dispensed. As is well
known, postage meters include an ascending register, that stores a running
25 total of all postage dispensed by the meter, and a descending register, that
holds the remaining amount of postage credited to the meter and that is
reduced by the amount of postage dispensed during a transaction. The
postage meter generally also includes a control sum register which provides a

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check upon the descending and ascending registers. The control sum register has a running account of the total funds being added into the meter. The control sum register must always correspond with the summed readings of the ascending and descending registers. The control sum register is the total amount of postage ever put into the machine and it is alterable only when adding funds to the meter. In this manner, by inspecting the various registers and securing them from tampering, the dispensing of postal funds may be accurately recorded, tracked and accounted for.

More recently, a postage printing system has been developed where the accounting structure described above is no longer resident with the user. Sometimes referred to as a "virtual postage meter", these types of postage printing systems dispense postage electronically over suitable communication channels (LAN, WAN, telephone lines, Internet, etc.). The user maintains an account with a remotely located data center (maintained by an authorized postage meter manufacturer) and receives postage securely using appropriate electronic data interchange techniques. At a later time, the user is invoiced for the amount of postage dispensed and any other fees associated with maintaining the account with the data center. Oftentimes, a secret code or token is derived from information particular to the mailpiece (the indicated postage amount, date, recipient address information, etc.) and is incorporated or embedded into the postal indicia for later use by a postal authority in verifying the integrity of the postal indicia. Examples of such systems are described in U.S. Patent No. 4,725,718 and U.S. Patent No. 5,454,038.

It is also known to print selected messages (sometimes referred to as ad slogans although such messages are not restricted to advertisements) along with the postal indicia. Generally, the message bears no relation to the postal indicia. In traditional postage meters employing either rotary drum or flat bed printing technology, the message was printed along with the postal indicia by including an additional printing die representative of the message. These dies were typically costly to manufacture and distribute and cumbersome for the postage meter user to install. Examples of die based systems for printing messages are disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,168,804

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Thus, the third party advertiser has no assurance that a target audience would be reached. For example, advertisements (e.g. sports related or hair loss, as examples) intended primarily for males may not be relevant if the

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Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a system and methods for improving the effectiveness of third party advertising on envelopes. Generally, this is accomplished by letting the third party advertisers establish restrictions or limits on the envelopes that they would like to place their messages on. The restrictions may be based upon user (sender) parameters, recipient parameters, quantitative parameters (time, piece count, etc.) or some combination of the above.

In accordance with the present invention, there is provided a postage printing system comprising a computer, a data center and a control system. The computer is in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope. The data center is in operative communication with the computer which in turn is located remotely from the data center. The data center includes a plurality of user accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts where each of the plurality of advertiser accounts includes respective ad data including message data and restriction data limiting the use of the message data. The control system is in operative communication with the data center and the computer and is for: (i) establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer corresponding to one of the plurality of user accounts and the data center; (ii) obtaining recipient address information from the user; and (iii) using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify message data available for printing on the envelope in conjunction with the postal indicia.

In accordance with the present invention, a method of operating a postage printing system and a method of operating a data center are also provided.

Therefore, it is now apparent that the present invention substantially overcomes the disadvantages associated with the prior art. Additional advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objects and advantages of the invention may be

realized and obtained by means of the instrumentalities and combinations particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

5 The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate presently preferred embodiments of the invention, and together with the general description given above and the detailed description of the preferred embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the invention. As shown throughout the drawings, like reference numerals designate like or corresponding parts.

10 Fig. 1 is a simplified representation of a postage printing system including a data center and a plurality of remotely located computer systems in electronic communication with the data center in which the present invention may be incorporated.

15 Fig. 2 is a front view of an envelope that has been processed by the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a more detailed representation of the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart showing the operation of the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

20 Fig. 5 is a schematic representation of an ad data file associated with a third party message to be printed on the envelope by the postage printing system in accordance with the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Referring to Fig. 1, an example of a postage printing system 10
25 indicative of one example of a virtual postage metering environment in which the present invention may be incorporated is shown. Generally, the postage printing system 10 includes a data center 200 in communication over any suitable communication network 110 (LAN, WAN, telephone line, internet, etc.) with a plurality of remotely located computers (personal computer,
30 workstation, laptop computer or the like) 150. Generally, it is anticipated that the computers 150 would be located in small business offices and/or in

private residences and used for a variety of purposes including obtaining postage. The data center 200 is maintained and operated by an authorized postage meter manufacturer or some other authorized agency. The computers 150 may be connected directly to a printer 120 or have access to a printer 130 over the suitable communication network 110. Those skilled in the art will recognize that not each computer 150 need utilize the same network 110 in contacting the data center 200. Likewise, the computer 150 may use one type of network 110 with the data center 200 and a different type of network with the printer 130. The remotely located computers 150 are representative of users wanting to obtain postage for their mailpieces (envelopes, post cards, packages and the like).

Referring to Fig. 2, an envelope 20 having an example of a postal indicia 30, a sender address 40 and a recipient address 50 printed thereon is shown. The postal indicia 30 includes both fixed data that does not change from postal indicia to postal indicia and variable data that may change from postal indicia to postal indicia. Generally, the fixed data includes a graphic design 31 (an eagle with stars), a meter serial number 32 uniquely identifying the postage meter (not shown) that dispensed the postage and a licensing or receiving post office identifier (zip code) 36. Generally, the variable data includes a date 34 indicating when the postage was dispensed, a postal value 38 indicating an amount of postage and other data 39 for use by the postal authority in verifying the authenticity of the postal indicia 30 using conventional techniques. However, those skilled in the art will recognize that the exact content of both the fixed data and variable data is subject to regulation by the postal authority and a matter of design choice. For example, in a virtual meter environment the meter serial number 32 may not be used and the receiving post office identifier (zip code) 36 may be variable data. Moreover, any format (numeric, alpha-numeric, bar code, other symbology and the like) may be employed for the verification data 39.

30 The further details of the envelope 20 will now be described. In conventional fashion, the postage meter user may optionally place a sender or return address 40 in the upper left hand corner of the envelope 20. As examples, the sender address 40 may be preprinted on the envelope 20.

printed on an adhesive label and affixed to the envelope 20 or printed concurrently with the postal indicia 30 by the printer 120. The recipient address 50 represents the delivery point for the envelope 20. A further detailed description of the printing of the recipient address 50 and the relationship of the recipient address 50 to the postal indicia 30 will be provided below. The remainder of the envelope 20 that is not occupied by the postal indicia 30, the sender address 40 and the recipient address 50 is available as advertising space 60 made up of a plurality of ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d. The advertising space 60 may contain one or more messages from third party advertisers.

Referring to Fig. 3, a more detailed schematic of the postage printing system 10 of the present invention is shown. The remote computer 150 includes a control system 152 that is in communication over a suitable communication network 110, such as: telephone lines, public and private network systems (Internet) or the like; with a control system 202 from the data center 200. The data center 200 may be based on any conventional computer based platform (PC, server, workstation, mainframe or the like) and includes the control system 202, a user database 204, an advertiser database 206, a postage evidencing system 208, an address hygiene database 210 and an address demographics database 212, all of which are in operative communication with each other over using conventional means. The user database 204 contains information concerning individual user accounts, such as: user name, user address, preferred payment vehicle or arrangements (periodic invoice, direct credit card authorization, electronic funds transfer, etc.), and the like, that have been established with the postage meter manufacturer. Similarly, the advertiser database 206 contains information concerning individual advertiser accounts, such as: advertiser name, advertiser address, preferred payment vehicle or arrangements (periodic invoice, direct credit card authorization, electronic funds transfer, etc.), ad data and the like, that have been established with the postage meter manufacturer. The address hygiene database 210 may employ any suitable database for use in cleansing submitted addresses to ensure that they are complete and correct, such as the Address Matching System (AMS) available

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envelope 20 associated with the hygiened recipient address 50. For the reasons discussed above, not every third party advertiser may want to advertise on every envelope 20. Generally, this step involves establishing an ad data profile for each advertisement and comparing the hygiened recipient address 50 to the ad data profile. Referring to Fig. 5, a schematic representation of an ad data profile file 207 associated with a third party message to be printed on the envelope 20 by the postage printing system 10 is shown. The ad data includes: graphic image data 207a; a subsidy rate data 207b; a billing rate 207c and restriction data. The restriction data may include sender restriction data, addressee restriction data and non-addressee (quantitative) restriction data, or any combination of types of restriction data. Preferably, the addressee restriction data includes: geographic restriction data 207d and recipient restriction data 207e. Preferably, the non-addressee restriction data includes: date restriction data 207f; multi-ad restriction data 207g; and ad space restriction data 207g. Piece count restriction data and budget limit data defining a maximum amount of advertising charges for a given time period may also be included in the non-addressee restriction data. The graphic image data 207a is representative of the desired message and may be stored in any manner of well known formats, such as: PDF, JPEG, GIF and the like. The subsidy rate data 207b includes information corresponding to the credit value that will be applied to the user's account for authorizing printing of the third party message on the envelope 20. The billing rate data 207c includes information corresponding to the debit value that will be applied to the third party advertiser's account in conjunction with printing of the third party message on the envelope 20. The geographic restriction data 207d provides an indication of what geographic areas the third party advertiser wants to target. This may be manifested by a restriction on the originating location or the destination location or preferably both. The recipient restriction data 207e provides an indication of the target audience. For example, distinctions may be made between a commercial and a residential address. In the preferred embodiment, the commercial versus residential distinction may be obtained directly from the user or from the Address Matching System. Alternatively, this may also be accomplished by

interrogating the hygiened recipient address 50 for certain 'key words' indicative of company, such as: inc., incorporated, co., company and the like. As another example that may be used independent from or in combination with the example previously discuss, the address demographics database 212 allows further targeting of messages. Generally, income, age and other demographic statistics are available for different regions of the country. Thus, the delivery point zip code in the hygiened recipient address 50 may be cross referenced to the address demographics database 212 and the resulting demographic statistics compared with the third party advertiser's requirements. For example, a luxury car manufacturer may only want its ads going to private residences from regions where the average income is above a predetermined threshold. The date restriction data 207f provides an indication of what dates the third party advertiser wants to advertise on. For example, expiration dates could be established beyond which the message will not be dispensed. As another example, periodic cycles (1st week of month, last week of month, on Mondays, 2 weeks before a holiday, etc.) could be established during which the message is available for printing. The multi-ad restriction data 207g provides an indication of whether or not the third party advertiser allows another third party advertiser to occupy to advertise on the envelope 20. The sentiment being that a multiplicity of messages will dilute the effectiveness of the individual messages versus if the individual messages were used singularly. If the third party advertiser allows other advertisers, then a reduced credit indicated in the subsidy rate data 207b and a reduced debit indicated in the billing rate data 207c may be applied when multiple messages are employed. The ad space restriction data 207h provides an indication of which ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d the third party advertiser authorizes for use with the message. Thus, the third party advertiser may exercise some control over where on the envelope 20 the message is printed. Similarly, as an option, the user may also provide an indication of which ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d the message may be printed in. For example, the user may be using an envelope 20 with preprinted images already occupying a portion of one or more ad zones 60a, 60b, 60c and 60d. In this scenario, the ad space restriction data 207h and

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Therefore, the inventive concept in its broader aspects is not limited to the specific details of the preferred embodiments described above, but is

What is Claimed is:

1. A postage printing system, comprising:
 - a computer in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope;
 - a data center in operative communication with the computer, the computer being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of postage accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on the envelope;
 - a control system in operative communication with the data center and the computer for:
 - establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer and the data center, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;
 - obtaining recipient address information from the user; and
 - using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.
2. The postage printing system of claim 1, wherein:
 - the control system is further for:
 - receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
3. The postage printing system of claim 2, wherein:
 - the control system is further for:
 - applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user; and
 - applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the

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selected message.

4. The postage printing system of claim 3, wherein:
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
5. The postage printing system of claim 4, wherein:
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
6. The postage printing system of claim 5, wherein:
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
7. The postage printing system of claim 4, wherein:
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
8. A method of operating a postage printing system, the postage printing system including a computer in operative communication with a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope and a data center in operative communication with the computer, the computer being located remotely from the data center, the data center including a plurality of postage accounts and a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on

the envelope, the method comprising the step(s) of:

establishing a transaction session between a user of the computer and the data center, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;
obtaining recipient address information from the user; and
using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the step(s) of:
receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step(s) of:
applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user;
and
applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein:
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein:
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein:
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions;

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multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein:
 - the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
 - the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
15. A method of operating a data center, the data center in operative communication with a computer system including a printer for printing a postal indicia on an envelope, the method comprising the step(s) of:
 - maintaining a plurality of postage accounts;
 - maintaining a plurality of advertiser accounts, each of the plurality of advertiser accounts including respective ad data having message data and restriction data, each of the message data representative of a message, respectively, for printing on the envelope;
 - establishing a transaction session with a user of the computer system, the user corresponding to one of the plurality of postage accounts;
 - receiving recipient address information from the user; and
 - using the recipient address information and the restriction data from the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify a subset of messages available for printing on the envelope.
16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step(s) of:
 - receiving from the user an indication of a selected message from the subset of messages that the user authorizes for printing on the envelope.
17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step(s) of:
 - applying a credit to the postage account corresponding to the user;
 - and

applying a debit to the advertiser account corresponding to the selected message.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein:
each of the restriction data, respectively, includes addressee restriction data and non-addressee restriction data.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein:
the addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: commercial/residential restrictions; demographic restrictions and geographic restrictions.
20. The method of claim 19, wherein:
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
21. The method of claim 18, wherein:
the envelope includes a plurality of ad space zones; and
the non-addressee restriction data, respectively, includes at least information relating to one of the following: piece count restrictions; multi-ad restrictions; date restrictions; ad space zone restrictions and budget restrictions.
22. The postage printing system of claim 2, wherein:
the control system is further for:
communicating a data packet to the computer, the data packet including first data indicative of a variable portion of the postal indicia and second data indicative of the selected message.
23. The postage printing system of claim 22, wherein:

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the computer utilizes the data packet to cause the printer to print the selected message in conjunction with the postal indicia on the envelope.

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POSTAGE PRINTING SYSTEM HAVING
SUBSIDIZED PRINTING OF THIRD PARTY MESSAGES

Abstract of the Invention

A postage printing system, comprising a computer, a data center and a
5 control system. The computer is in operative communication with a printer for
printing a postal indicia on an envelope. The data center is in operative
communication with the computer which in turn is located remotely from the
data center. The data center includes a plurality of user accounts and a
plurality of advertiser accounts where each of the plurality of advertiser
10 accounts includes respective ad data including message data and restriction
data. The control system is in operative communication with the data center
and the computer and is for: (i) establishing a transaction session between a
user of the computer corresponding to one of the plurality of user accounts
and the data center; (ii) obtaining recipient address information from the user;
15 and (iii) using the recipient address information and the restriction data from
the plurality of advertiser accounts to identify message data available for
printing on the envelope in conjunction with the postal indicia.

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FIG. 1

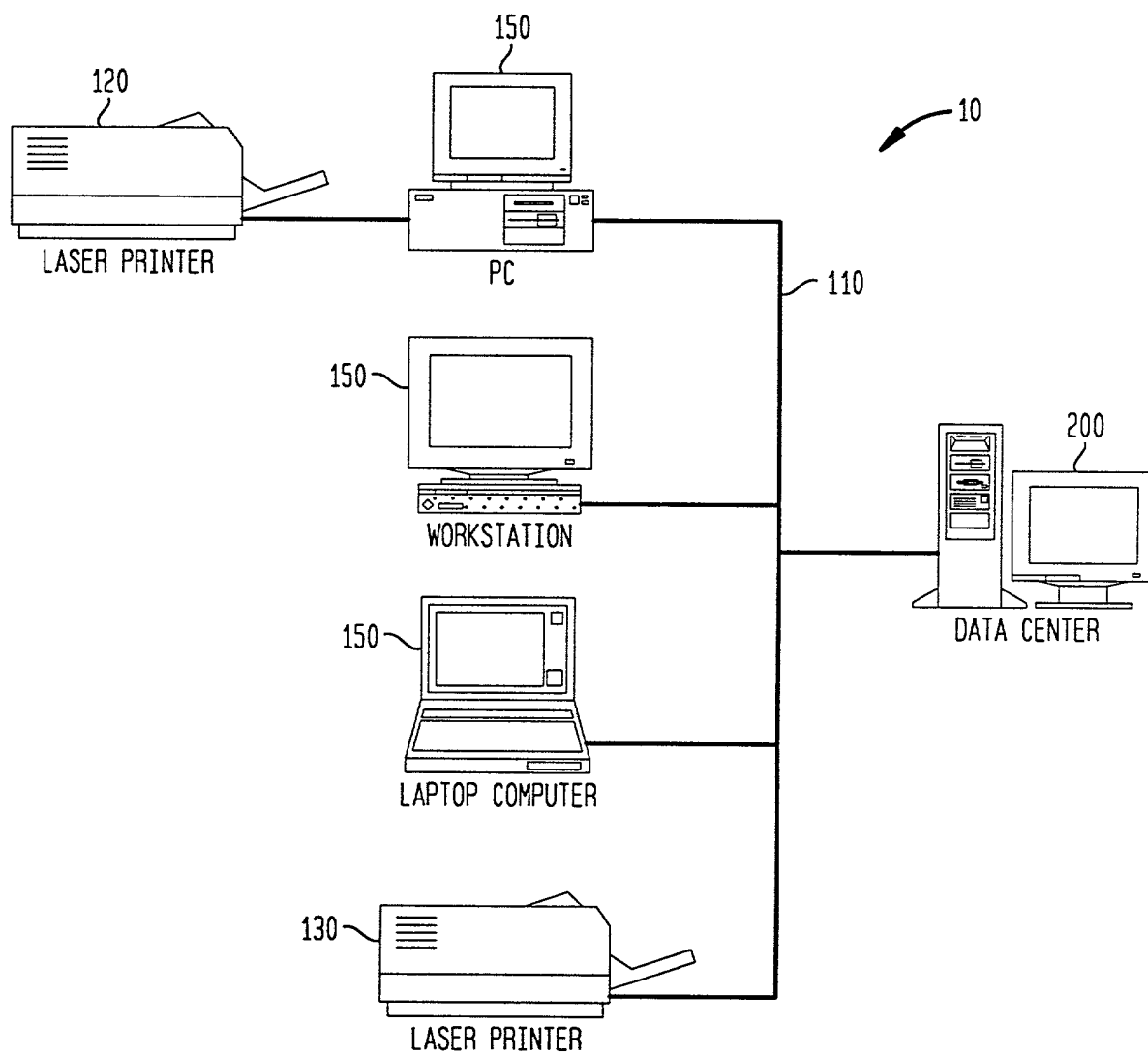


FIG. 4

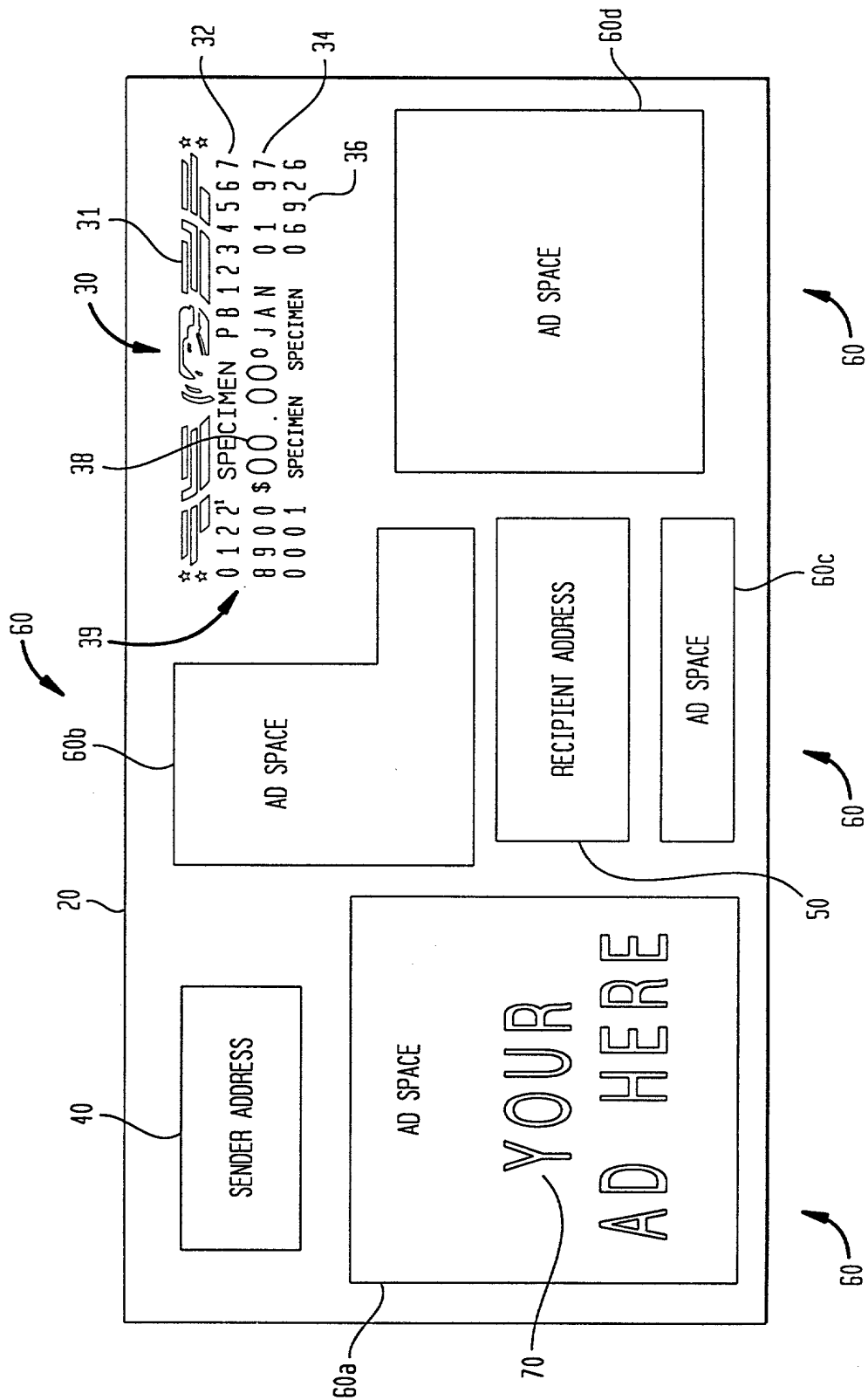


FIG. 3

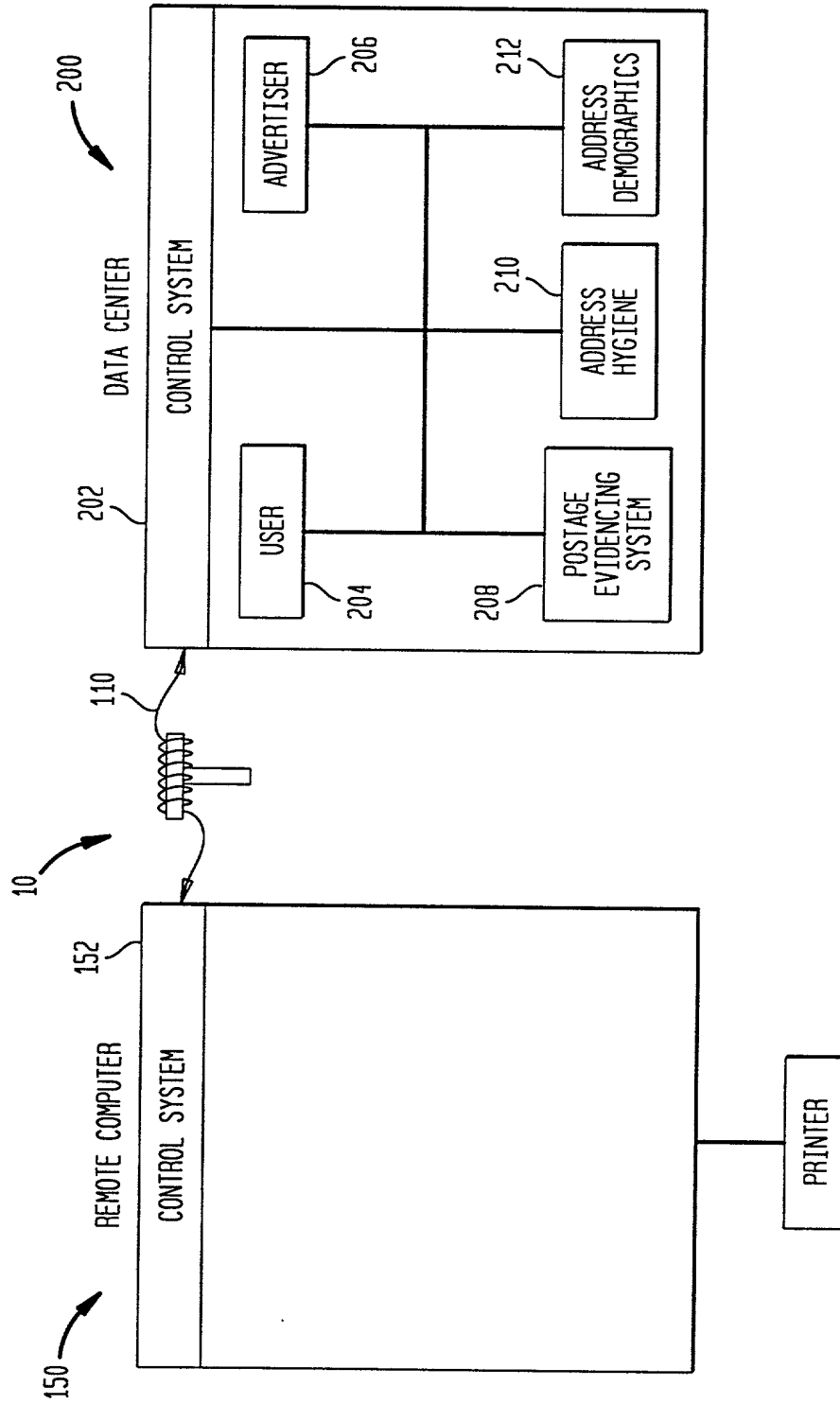


FIG. 4

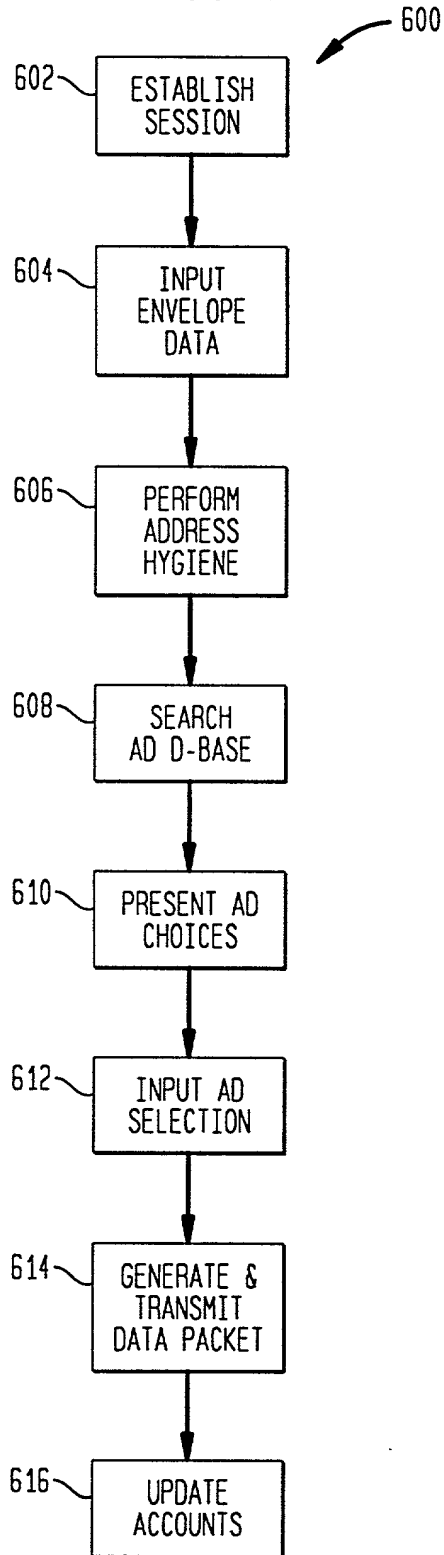
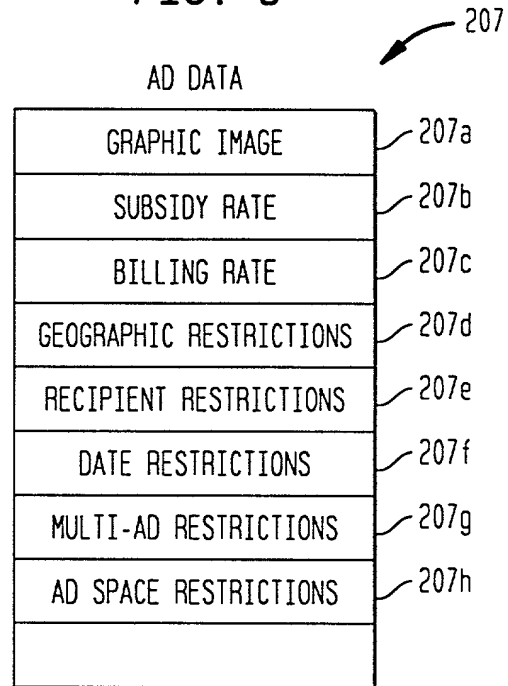


FIG. 5



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DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY
Patent Application

Attorney's Docket Number
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We hereby declare that all statements made herein of our own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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